

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses general framework of this study. It encompasses the research background, research problem, research objective, scope and limitation, research significance and definition of key terms.

1.1 Research Background

Group assignment has recently become a common practice in schools and institutions around the world. It allows students to work collaboratively with others students, either in a small or large group. Other terms as like cooperative learning, learning communities, peer learning and constructive learning are frequently employed to define this kind of learning activity that demands students to work together in a group to achieve a certain goal (Masgoret & Ward, 2004).

In group assignment, students are able to sharpen their critical thinking skills, improves problem-solving strategies, internalizes content knowledge, explore or discuss an assigned topic, or to complete projects and even share and exchange some ideas with group members to achieve their goals (Holter, 1995; Porter, 2006; and Schofield, 2006).

According to Li & Lam (2013) and Johnson & Johnson (2000), group assignment brings numerous positive outcomes to the students, which may be classified into three aspects namely achievement/professional, social skill, and interpersonal skill (see chapter 2 for detail explanations).

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, students will obtain typical advantages mentioned above. Students with lower level competence can work

together with higher level ones. As Porter (2006) proved that both high and low students who work in groups assignment achieve better results and are more satisfied with their learning experiences.

However, despite a series number of advantages, group assignment has its own challenges. Although interdependence is highly regarded in a group, it is not easy to ask all group members to actively participate in a group. Bentley & Warwick (2013) revealed that during the discussion in group, some students show their poor commitment, low contribution and time management, and even tend to be a passive students who solely assigns to make power point for presentation and merely depend the task on active learners. Daba, et. al. (2017) found that students' poor background knowledge of content, low confidence, lack of experiences and irresponsible to do their work were factors causing students' low interest in accepting responsibility to do their work. Hence, it is a vital point for teachers to give feedback for students' work so they will be encouraged to improve their learning. Working as a group on an assignment is meant for students to have enough ability to demonstrate the subject mastery, ability to coordinate tasks, manage interpersonal relationships and negotiate solutions when conflict arises in group.

Although group assignment produces pros and cons, it is noteworthy to take students' perception into account. Some studies on students' perception toward group assignment have been carried out. Many investigations solely investigated the local students perception. Nonetheless, to the best of the researcher knowledge, none of investigations focus on joining local and International students in Indonesian setting. Therefore, this research seeks to

fulfill previous research gap. For this reason, this study aimed at investigating students' perception both local and international students toward group assignment of English Language Education Department at University of Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM).

1.2 Research Problems

With a foundation of research background above, the questions to be investigated in this study are:

1. What is the perception of local and international students of University of Muhammadiyah Malang toward group assignment?
2. Which group of students has more positive perception toward group assignment?

1.3 Research Objectives

In line with the research problem, the purpose of this study can lead to:

1. Know the local and international students perception at UMM toward group assignment.
2. Figure out which group of students has more positive perception toward group assignment.

1.4 Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study is the local and international students' of UMM perception toward group assignment. Meanwhile, this current research is limited to only 7 Thai students and 7 Indonesian students in academic year 2015/2016 majoring English education at University of Muhammadiyah Malang.

1.5 Research Significances

The result of this study is expected to impact positively to both theoretical and practical framework in EFL. Theoretically, the findings hopefully provide the real and meaningful information about group assignment and how this type of learning approach could contribute positively to English proficiency development. Practically, this current study convinces the English lecturers to confidently implement group assignment even when teaching international students due to its effectiveness in instructional practices. This research is also to fulfill the previous researches' gap about group assignment as the previous researchers merely focus on investigating local students perception. Furthermore, it is also beneficial to future potential researchers in conducting similar field of this study with more participants and could be an additional reference for them.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misinterpretation of any terms used in this research, the researcher will clarify following terms:

1. Group assignment: A group assignment constitutes a form of collaborative learning in which more than one students (i.e., Three, four, or more students) work together in a group to achieve certain goals (Kudek, 2016; and Mark & O'Connor, 2013).
2. Local students: The local students are a group of students studying in their home country. They are the permanent residents (Brown & Daly, 2004).

3. International students: The international students are a group of students studying overseas. They are staying and studying in the country that is not their origin country (Zar, 2009).
4. Perception: An internal process by which individuals classify and comprehend their sensory impressions to provide meaningful definition toward their social life (Robbins and Judge, 2013).

